

RELEASING AN ALBUM IN THE US

Entering the Foreign Market with an Independent Label Resources

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<p>Tiivistelmä</p> <p>Toiminnallisen opinnäytteen tavoitteena oli tarkastella musiikkiaänitteen julkaisua Yhdysvalloissa suomalaisen itsenäisen levy-yhtiön ja artistin näkökulmasta. Opinnäyte keskittyy artistin markkinointiin ja promootioon itsenäisen pienlevy-yhtiön rajallisilla resursseilla, ja siihen kuinka ulkomaista markkina-aluetta, sen toimijoita ja mediaa tulisi lähestyä. Esimerkkitapauksena käytetään laulaja-lauluntekijä Mirel Wagnerin esikoisalbumin julkaisua ja sitä varten toteutettua markkinointia ja promootiota Yhdysvalloissa keväällä 2012.</p> <p>Yhdysvallat on suurin yksittäinen musiikkimarkkina koko maailmassa. Opinnäyte pyrki selvittämään onko Yhdysvaltojen markkinoille hakeutumisessa löydettävissä yleisiä hyväksihavaittuja tapoja. Opinnäytetyö raportoi äänilevyn lisensoinnin ulkomaiselle levy-yhtiölle, levy-yhtiön ja yhteistyökumppanien toteuttaman markkinoinnin, artistin promotoinnin ja tiedottamisen pääpainona uusmedia, musiikkiblogit, verkkolehdet ja sosiaalinen media.</p> <p>Digitaalinen kehitys ja muutokset niin musiikin jakelussa kuin musiikkimediassakin ovat asettaneet haasteita, mutta myös mahdollisuuksia etenkin itsenäisille toimijoille. Monikansalliset levy-yhtiöt ovat edelleen määrävässä markkina-asemassa, mutta uusmedia ja digitaalinen jakelu ovat tuoneet kansainväliset markkinat myös itsenäisten levy-yhtiöiden ulottuville.</p> <p>Opinnäytetyö analysoi verkkomediaan keskittyvän markkinointi-, promootio- ja tiedotuskampanjan toteutusta ja tuloksia ja osoittaa kuinka kaikki musiikin promootiokanavat eivät ole kaikkien musiikkialalla toimivien ulottuvilla. Opinnäytteen tulokset osoittavat verkkomediaan keskittyvän kampanja oleva toteuttamiskelpoinen ja tuottava vaihtoehto uudelle artistille ja läsnäolo ja kiertue-toiminta kohdemarkkinoilla on tärkeää, mutta aikaa vievää ja kallista. Lisäksi opinnäyte toteaa paikallisen ammattitaidon hyödyntämisen olevan suositeltavaa, joskaan ei välttämätöntä.</p>		
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<p>Abstract</p> <p>The objective of the project thesis was to inspect the releasing of an album of a Finnish artist with independent record label resources in the North American market. The focus of the thesis was on the marketing and promotion of an artist with an independent label's limited resources, and on how the foreign market, its operators and media should be approached. As a case the thesis used the singer-songwriter Mirel Wagner's debut album and its marketing and the promotion for the release in the US during spring 2012.</p> <p>The US is the biggest music market in the world. The thesis tried to solve if there were common means to enter the US market. The thesis describes the licensing of a sound recording to a foreign record label and marketing, artist promotion and publicity executed by the record label and their affiliates, the focus being on new media, music blogs, webzines and in social media.</p> <p>The digital age and changes in both music distribution and music media has created new challenges, but also opportunities for the independent operators. The major recording labels are still dominating the music markets, but the new media and digital distribution have made it more feasible for the independent labels to succeed as well.</p> <p>The thesis analyses the implementation and results of an online focused marketing, promotion and publicity campaign and reports how all the promotion channels are not available for everyone in the music business. The results suggest that using online campaign is the most feasible and efficient option for a new artist and how touring and appearance in the target market are important for the success but expensive and time consuming. Furthermore, the thesis conclude that using local expertise is not necessary but recommendable.</p>		
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1 INTRODUCTION

There has been a great deal of discussion about the success of Finnish music abroad. Following the success of The Rasmus and Sunrise Avenue in the German-speaking European market and HIM and Nightwish in the North American market there are several indie artists on the verge of global success. At least this seems to be the impression based on what can be read from the Finnish music media. During the last few years there has been Finnish indie bands featured abroad, for example Regina in music blog Pitchfork, Delay Trees synched in the US TV series Grey's Anatomy and we have heard a great deal about Rubik, Zebra and Snake etc. However, it still is fair to ask if it is possible to establish success in the difficult North American market.

With present day's decreasing record sales and niche markets in different musical styles, success stories might not be heard anymore. However, independent artists and small independent labels are able to bring new music to the audiences in ways that could not have been imagined before. Digital music has made it more feasible to make profit for indie labels. Furthermore, manufacturing every single track for selling is not needed anymore. The digital era has also made it possible to access the recorded music everywhere. When tangible music and its availability are based on record stores, their location and their willingness to deliver music, the digital distribution is practically free worldwide and only depending on an Internet connection. That makes the music available instantly and discovering it easier. (Katz, 2005) However, the question arises whether today's music enthusiasts and the users and consumers of indie music are interested in digital and online formats or whether they want their music as a tangible product, on a vinyl or at least on a CD. Moreover, is it possible for Finnish artists to succeed with independent label resources in the US market and if it is, what kind of means and tools would be needed?

This thesis will focus on the challenges and opportunities of Finnish indie music and its success outside Finland, especially in North America. The

objectives of this report were to evaluate the possibilities to enter the foreign markets with Finnish music and to suggest functional ways to enter the new market. As a case in this thesis was used the Finnish singer-songwriter Mirel Wagner and her self-titled debut album licensed and released in North America and the US by Friendly Fire Recordings during the spring of 2012. The author of this thesis has worked with Kioski Records, a Finnish independent record label and the owner of the master recording of the Mirel Wagner album, from August 2011 and he has seen the development from the album release, first in the Nordic countries, followed by the continental Europe and the UK and, eventually, North America. Most of the promotion and marketing abroad has been conducted by the licensees of the album or people appointed by them, but Kioski Records has had a great opportunity to observe how to manage and implement a functional promotion and publicity campaign.

Collecting information about the rapidly changing music industry from academic resources is challenging. Therefore, the resources used in this thesis varied from online articles and interviews of music industry professionals to academic publications.

2 MUSIC MARKET

According to Smirke (2012), IFPI reports that the US is the biggest music market in the world followed by Japan, Germany and the UK (Smirke, 2012). All the four markets are dominated by domestic music, and they would thus be difficult to enter by a foreign artist. The UK also takes a major share of the music imported to the US, which makes it even more difficult to access for artists from other regions and countries. This thesis focuses more on domestic music consumption in chapter 2.4. According to a Joint Research Centre study, the Western European (34%), North American (31%) Asian Pacific (32%) markets were quite similar in size with regard to the total sales of recorded music in 2010 (Leurdijk & Nieuwenhuis, 2012). Without synchronization the revenues in 2011 the global recorded music sales were \$16.3 billion, and the USA represented \$4.37 billion of the total (Smirke, 2012).

The definition of an indie artist and an indie label is at the very least vague. The name indie may come originally from independent recording labels and their repertoire but it does not necessarily mean that today. The description has changed during the times, and the term indie artist can be used to describe an artist with a do-it-yourself (DIY) approach. Indie may also refer to a musical genre, a type of sound for a rock band especially within the guitar rock genre and to a way to arrange songs and even to a clothing style. The success of American alternative rock as so called indie music during the '90s did actually make indie music quite commercial. (Musaneuvosto 8.4.2010, 2010) In this thesis an indie artist is used to describe an artist who is signed to an independent label, not to a major label.

For inspecting the actual implementation of the case in this thesis, some theoretical foundation had to be established: the definition of independent record labels, a description of their resources and methods used when introducing a new artist as well as of their marketing, promotion and publicity. The focus was on promoting an indie artist and accessing the foreign music market with independent record label resources.

2.1 The Recording industry

The recording companies are specialised in capitalising music by sales of recorded music. A recording company makes it possible for an artist to perform a song or songs to a sound recording that is turned to a product, music release on a tangible music carrier or in a digital form, distributed by music distributor to music retailers who will sell it to the consumers. (Leurdijk & Nieuwenhuis, 2012) Chapter 2.3 contains a more detailed description of music distribution. By using marketing, promotion and publicity the record label's aim is to create visibility for the artist and the release of the recording and benefit from the recordings sold. An important part in the case of this thesis is licensing of an album where the a record label and the owner of the master recording enter a licensing contract with another record label and so allow the contracting partner to manufacture, sell and benefit from the copies made from the master recording.

Music recording industry and record labels are often divided in two groups - a few multinational corporations called majors and a large number of small and medium enterprises, SMEs which are called independent or indie labels. (Leurdijk & Nieuwenhuis, 2012). An independent record label in its pure meaning is in no connection with the major record labels or their subsidiaries, affiliated companies or sister companies. However, in this thesis, the terms 'indie label' also refers to independent labels that may have distribution deals, licensing deals or other cooperation with a major company but are owned by individual people, not by a corporation. One way to define independent labels is to separate them from the major labels.

2.1.1 The Major Recording Companies

In the nineties there used to be six recording labels that were referred to as the major labels. They were BMG Music, Polygram, EMI Group, Warner Music Group, Sony Music (later Sony BMG and finally Sony Music Entertainment) and Universal Music Group. (Leurdijk & Nieuwenhuis, 2012) However, as a result of numerous mergers, joint ventures and sales, the latest being the

demerging of EMI Group in 2012, there are only three multinational major recording companies. After the sale opposition statements of the independent recording labels were not approved by European and American trade regulators in the autumn of 2012, EMI Group was divided, so that the recording segment ended up to Universal and the publishing part to Sony/ATV (Universal's EMI deal approved in Europe and US, 2012). These three major labels left are Warner Music Group, Universal Music Group and Sony Music Entertainment. They include several subsidiaries, most of them independent labels merged into majors or bought by them. When there are only three major recording companies, the rest of the market is represented by independent record labels.

2.1.2 The Independent Recording Companies

“Indie market share is growing. They’re the ones breaking new acts, developing market niches, and regionally pretesting their artists.” (Spellman, 2008, 14)

The description of independent labels varies greatly and even the main field of operations can be somewhere else in music industry, in artist booking, distribution or recording studio operations. It is estimated that there are over 1,500 independent record labels, distributed by nearly 200 independent record distributors and accounting for most of the recorded music sales remaining from the major labels (Spellman, 2008). According to Leurdijk and Nieuwenhuis (2012), KEA (2006) reports that the size of the companies may vary from self-employed people to micro enterprises and SMEs. They often concentrate on a specific genre of the niche market and are willing to support creativity over commercial potential. Since the independent companies are smaller than the majors, they often do not have the funding or the same possibility to access capital as the majors have. (Leurdijk & Nieuwenhuis, 2012) This thesis represents the perspective of the micro enterprises of independent labels. Lack of human resources sets limitations to indie labels, and outsourcing some functions is not only lucrative but also a necessity.

Since trade regulators ordered Universal to sell some of the subsidiaries and parts of EMI, estimating the future market share of the majors is still difficult.

Depending on the source it has been estimated that the late four majors represented a market share of 80 to 85 percent (Spellman, 2008; Macy, 2009). According to Billboard, the first half of the 2011 collective market share of the independent record companies was 31,2 percent in the US, which is more than any single major company. (Edwards, 2012) This can be explained by the success of a single artist recording for an independent company, Adele. At some point she was reported to represent nearly 7% of the entire record sales (Lindvall, 2011). Next Big Sound (The State of Online Music, 2013) claimed that majors represented three quarters of sales in 2012. In any case, the majors' market share is substantial.

The biggest difference between the majors and independent labels is not the ownership or the market share, but how they operate. Big companies with massive production units are not as flexible as are the small companies. This can be seen in the music they release and how they discover talent. "Majors today seem to act more like film distributors than production houses. They have the organisation and capital to take new music to the public, but little ability to create the music themselves." (Spellman, 2008, 59) There has been a long history of major labels picking their new mainstream names from indie labels. Coldplay might sound mainstream now, but they were picked from an indie label called Fierce Panda. (Musaneuvosto 8.4.2010, 2010) Some kind of symbiosis can be seen where the indies are the testing ground for tomorrow's stars, and with a fair deal both, the majors and indies, can profit (Spellman, 2008). Especially the lack of human and financial resources drives independent labels to creative solutions when it comes to introducing a new artist to the market (Leurdijk & Nieuwenhuis, 2012). When the independent label resources are as limited they are, it is quite common that the same people work in marketing, promotion and publicity, therefore it is feasible to cover it as one entity.

2.2 Marketing, Promotion and Publicity

According to Cutler (2010), there are three goals that marketing aims for: keeping the customers engaged, attracting new customers and increasing

name recognition. Every time the name is repeated, people's minds register it subconsciously and in time it will build up to be a recognised brand. People do not normally buy an album or a track just by one listening, the message has to be repeated by several media. Moreover, it should be considered what media are used for reaching the right audience, the audience that are likely to invest in the product offered. (Cutler, 2010)

The difference between marketing, promotion and publicity is unclear. Quite often marketing is considered to be paid advertising and promotion free visibility in media. However, when the term publicity is tried to be explained with these descriptions, it is usually realised how overlapping these terms are. Allen (2009) describes how the record promotion department of a record label handles the playing of the record in the radio and the publicity department handles the journalists and the media. (Allen, 2009) Virginie Berger (2010) defines marketing as a concept which objective is to make the audience know the artists, their music and trust them. Berger (2010) defines promotion as a concept where this audience is convinced to invest in the artists and their music. Even though in the digital age DIY artist can do basically everything by themselves, the IFPI survey shows that over 70 percent of unsigned artists think that marketing and promotion is the most important support they want from the record labels (Investing in music, 2012).

Advertising is an important part of marketing and promotion of music, albeit as Leurdijk and Nieuwenhuis (2012) report about independent labels' difficulties to access funding. Therefore contrary to major labels, it is more likely that the indie labels do not have the capital for advertising and that they are more dependent on promotion and free publicity for the artists and releases. Even if there were funding, advertising may not be cost-effective for indie music. Concerning the whole music industry, it has been estimated that marketing spend of recording labels have decreased to US\$1.7 billion in 2011 from US\$ 2.4 billion in 2008, so the search for economical models is a trend for everyone (Record labels invest US\$4.5 billion in new music, 2012).

A successful publicity campaign can create, for example, online buzz and interest by journalists in a way that no advertising campaign can do. When

advertising can create an image of an artist willing to sell their music, an article in a magazine or website can suggest that there is more to it than just a commercial purpose, there is something deeper, artistic and credible. (Allen, 2009)

Probably the most important part of publicity is the contacts and connections to the press and media. These contacts can be maintained by the label itself, but often, when entering a foreign market, it may be feasible to use local expertise, a publicist, record label or other people who can assure that the media will write about the artist. Hiring an outside publicist or publicity firm on a project-by-project basis might be cost-efficient for an independent label when there might be slow periods in the business, and the work contribution of the employees is not necessarily needed. Outsourcing publicity work reduces the workload of a small label but adds the oversight duties of the label staff. Naturally, when trust between the label and the publicist is established, overseeing the progress is easier and it does not have to be very detailed. (Allen, 2009)

When building a promotion campaign, the scheduling is significant. A publicity plan is designed to schedule and include all the non-paid promotion and press coverage, and is timed to maximise the artist exposure and record sales (Allen, 2009). It is crucial to make the plans and implement them several weeks before the event. For example, the usual publicity cycle for an album starts at least 18 weeks before the release (Ball, 2010).

2.2.1 Scheduling the Promotion

Allen (2009) says that according to Spellman (2000), because of the short attention span of the public, publicity has to be constructed in 'waves' of media exposure with every wave including a promotional angle such as an upcoming tour, an album or a single release. The publicity plan is developed by establishing the goals of publicity, such as awareness or record sales. Market is then researched for finding the proper tools and media in order to reach the precise audience. For the right media the material is then created and the pitching timetable set. The material may include promotional pictures, artist

biography, press kits, press releases and so forth. The pitch letters are introductions of the artist and material for the media and they should never be mass-mailed. The letter has to point out why the recipient should be interested in the artist or the news and why the media is just the right one for publishing the material. (Allen, 2009)

When the material is ready the pitching can start from the media with the longest lead time, the time that the journalists and editors need for publishing the material. The longest lead in the music media is in the magazines and TV since the content has to be chosen well before the production starts. (Allen, 2009) As the music media have changed and moved more and more online, the lead times have become shorter. Websites, blogs and online video sites can be updated promptly after the material has been provided. That has led to shorter articles and stories, and, therefore, quite a great deal of music media website content is announcements of news relating to artists, their music, concerts and tours. The media tends to write about current topics, and it is vital for the artists and their representatives to inform the media about the news and the development on their career.

2.2.2 Music Media and Press

Music media can be divided to broadcasting music and music press, both are aiming to gain audience with music (Leurdijk & Nieuwenhuis, 2012). For broadcasting music radio has been the most important channel all along its existence and television, especially Music Television was really influential during '80s and '90s. The effective music medias and their consumption has changed in same way as the music industry in general and as Bruce Houghton says to Bobby Owsinski (2009) there used to be a time when radio DJ playing a song would bring people to a concert but today it is the blogs that bring the audience for the artist. (Owsinski, 2009) Apart from the old media there has developed a new kind of media, social networks, blogs and YouTube that can establish new artists (Leurdijk & Nieuwenhuis, 2012).

As journalist Panu Rätty says in Radio Helsinki programme Musaneuvosto (2012) the power of music magazines used to base on the fact that there was

no other way to get the information before, there was no social media, in fact the music press was the social media of music (Musaneuvosto 12.1.2012, 2012). Ben Westhoff (2012) wrote in LA Weekly blog that since not a single person complained after they stopped publishing album reviews they knew that nobody read those (Westhoff, 2012). However, that is not about the death of critics, it is “more about a shifting of curators” (Resnikoff, 2012b). Mark Geiger said in This Week in Music interview (Rogers & Geiger, 2011) that with just one great review in Pitchfork followed with appropriate resources and implementation an artist can have a break-through. But there is definitely a change in the music that traditional music press covers. According to The Guardian, from 51 NME covers in 2011 only 11 featured a new-coming artist (Lynskey, 2012). Today music magazines are more and more focused on certain niche market and especially for older audience, such as Classic Rock. “There is no Dub step magazine” (Musaneuvosto 12.1.2012, 2012).

For radio, using music to fill the airtime and increase listener volume has always been ideal (Leurdijk & Nieuwenhuis, 2012). In the US, indie labels release over 80% of the music every year and represent 30% of digital radio play, but only 5% of the traditional radio broadcasting. Viral from friends and families being the second biggest music discovery source, the FM Radio is still the biggest, and the late four majors have controlled 95 percent of that radio play giving no room for the indies. (Spellman, 2008; Resnikoff, 2012d)

According to Larry Gerbrandt, interviewed by Bobby Owsinski (2009), today television is not as influential it used to be in the '90s because there is so much more channels and programmes dividing the attention of the public. Moreover, TV programmes are usually interested in established artists and major acts which can create a challenge to the label trying to pitch a new artist. This applies to other big entertainment media, radio channels and magazines as well. To raise the interest of media the new artist has to have an interesting story to compete with the superstars and well-known artists. The fact that there are always more unestablished artists competing the fewer slots remained from the established artists, makes the challenge even greater. (Allen, 2009)

All media consumption is moving to web and it is a natural change to music as well. Advantage for online media compared to FM radio, print and television is the possibility to have written information, audio and video in the same place and ability to use it all together.

2.2.3 Online Media

Whether it is literature, music, films or other products, people tend to take their reference first from the people they know and trust when choosing how and what to consume or buy. This applies to music business professionals and their already existing contacts as well. Press and media, promoters and publicists, booking agents and record label representatives check out first the artists recommended by the people they know are trustworthy to not to waste their time. On the other hand, the audience, people who listen and buy music, have their own trusted sources for finding new music. It can be their close friends or social media contacts but as well a blog or online magazine. (Cutler, 2010; Music Discovery Still Dominated by Radio, Says Nielsen Music 360 Report, 2012)

Social media can be divided roughly to two segments: Artist's social media where the artist personally or representative of the artist produce the content and third party social media where a party not connected to the artist creates the content. The biggest difference between these segments is that in the first the artist can affect on the material provided to the audience whereas the material provided by the third party cannot be controlled by the artist or representatives of them. When artist social media is used by the artist themselves or someone representing the artist it can be used to provide precise information controlled by the artist exactly when the information is wanted to be provided (Leurdijk & Nieuwenhuis, 2012). The personal social media is fast and can target the right audience and the followers of the artist accurately.

Artist Web Presence

Web presence is essential today. When people hear about a new artist, one of the first things they do is search more information about them from the Internet. To be able to affect what information there is and what information is found first the artist has to have their own web presence. Spellman (2008) states that in addition to promoting and selling their music artist website can offer other information which is not available anywhere else. The artist website is not only followed and read by the fans, it is also reviewed by the music industry specialists. The online content can be, and should be updated when needed. (Spellman, 2008) Online presence makes the two-way communication possible when the audience can participate and give feedback via artist's media. Offering online streaming of music makes it possible for the audience to have a quick introduction to the style and genre the artist represents with little effort. The artist website can provide more in-depth information. The website is easier to control but more costly to maintain and it needs some level of expertise to create. In addition to the artist's own website the most important sites today are the social media sites including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and SoundCloud. Social media is a great place to share thoughts of the artist, provide current information, and make possible to audience to listen and share artist's music and in that way create word-of-mouth (Leurdijk & Nieuwenhuis, 2012). The amount of music played and shared through Facebook is enormous, at least according to Facebook itself (Hochberg, 2012).

Facebook and other social media channels do not really show the amount of real fans the artist has but it surely is a great channel to interact and inform people who are interested in the artist and the reactions of the fans can be followed there. It is easy to push the thumb icon to like the artist but it may not relate to actual album sales or attending to concerts. Virpi Immonen, manager of Michael Monroe and Von Hertzen Brothers, says that activity of artists in social media encourage fans to follow the sites more often (Musaneuvosto 25.11.2010, 2010).

The problem with social media and especially with Facebook is that the artist cannot completely control the functions of social media or the content uploaded. Facebook may change the layout of the site when ever they want or close down entire pages without further investigation. During the spring 2012 Facebook changed its Pages so that the landing page, the page where the social media user first goes to when entering the artist Facebook page, cannot be controlled anymore. Before the change the audience could be directed straight to the section or the application wanted. After the change the visitor ends up to the timeline invariably. This resulted as a heavy drop in traffic to applications providing music players to Facebook and forced the application providers to adapt to the changes made and alter their products to offer the music player straight on the Facebook Timeline. (Resnikoff, 2012e) During the autumn 2012, Facebook made changes again so that the Facebook Page owner should pay to promote their posts to reach the whole follower base of their page (Johnston, 2012). This may lead artists to switch to Twitter or even recently re-invented MySpace.

Third Party Online Media

As Mark Geiger said music blogs and webzines have partly replaced music magazines especially as an introducer or presenter of new music. (Rogers & Geiger, 2011) Music webzines such as Quietus, Stereogum, Drowned in Sound and of course Pitchfork could be the new opinion leaders. However, Eric Harvey (2012) compared in his Marathonpacks blog the Pitchfork 2011 top 50 albums and their sale figures in the US and it seems that artists such as Swedish Lykke Li, 43th on the list, obtained probably more blog posts and visibility in online media than actual album sales and only five albums on the Pitchfork list sold more than 100,000 copies in the US in 2011 (Harvey, 2012). In the UK The Guardian was inspired by Harvey's article and conducted a similar exercise. Their critic's top 40 albums of 2011 included 12 albums that sold over 100,000 in the UK, which is a much smaller market (Lynskey, 2012). So it might be reasonable to say that when the new opinion leader, music blog brings visibility for the artist, the old media still obtains the sales. Of course, figures in these articles do not show the ones from YouTube, Spotify or other

streaming services and differences in online and print media in separate continents and countries are not completely comparable but it shows the course of the music and media consumption.

Similarly to music press and print media, the third party social media is often contacted by the artist representative with a press release, an open letter or with upcoming material wanted to be written or posted about. The third party then decides what and when they are going to post about the material provided, if they are going to post anything at all. (Allen, 2009) In some cases the third party decide to write about the artist even when they are not contacted by anyone. This is often the goal of viral marketing and word-of-mouth, even though the positivity of the campaign cannot be predicted. The material uploaded by the third party has to be provided for the party and filtered by them, and in many cases altered by them as well.

2.3 Distribution Models

The traditional way of distributing music was to produce a certain tangible carrier for the music and distribute it to shops and stores that would sell it to the audience. The Internet era, the revolution of digital music and new ways to use and listen to music without actual tangible product, have resulted that today the distribution of music can be divided to two separate models, distributing of physical recording, usually CD or LP, sometimes DVD or C-cassette to online and high street retail stores, and distributing digital music to online stores, digital download stores and streaming services. (Macy, 2009)

Recent years have changed both music distribution and retail. High street stores are closing and music retail is centering more and more to small number of large chains that are focused on some other products than music, such as electronic devices or even groceries (Leurdijk & Nieuwenhuis, 2012). It has even been said that one of the biggest download stores, iTunes Store, was originally established to improve sales of Apple's iPod MP3 player. With key national music distributors high percentage of high street retail stores and

its customer can be reached. (Spellman, 2008) It goes without saying that with just Amazon and iTunes, pretty much the whole English speaking world can be reached (Moore, 2012).

In addition to actual owning the music there has grown a wide array of different services to access music that require only an Internet connection, appropriate hardware such as computer or mobile device and web browser or a certain software application. The most important services in audio streaming might be Spotify, Deezer, MOG, Rdio and Pandora, and in video streaming services YouTube and Vimeo. The service can be ad-funded and free for the user, it can have a monthly subscription fee or it can have a free basic model with features that require subscription. The functions of the services varies from on-demand services where the user can choose precisely what song and artist to listen to online radio services where the playlist is created by the service by genre, an artist or a decade (Digital Music Report 2013, 2013). The revenues for the artist from these streaming services are yet quite low and services are often accused of cannibalising the music sales by decreasing the CD and download sales.

Today, even the difference between the digital download store and streaming service is getting dimmer hence the cloud services. When the digital track is bought from an online store it can be directly transferred to user's cloud space on the online store server and then streamed via Internet. This saves space from user's device and the track can be accessed from several different devices without separate downloading. (Digital Music Report 2012, 2012)

Offering artist music videos for streaming could be seen either as a promotional tool or as a distribution for a streaming service. Both views are equally right. As a distribution model video streaming services like YouTube and Vimeo do not generate considerable income if the viewing count is not somewhere over millions of views. However, this is the case in audio streaming services like Spotify and Rdio as well, at least for now. For audience these services are useful, especially for discovering the new music. A study by Nielsen shows that YouTube is actually the most used tool to listen music for teens in the US and when an artist can decide to keep their music

unavailable from other streaming services like Spotify and Rdio, it is most certainly available on YouTube for free, and unauthorised (Sydell, 2012; Music Discovery Still Dominated by Radio, Says Nielsen Music 360 Report, 2012; Knopper, 2012).

It is said that old distribution models and tangible music are losing market share for the new models but British study shows that 80% of British consumers still buy physical music and 70% buy download. The study also shows that physical product gives security for the owner and streaming is commonly used in the discovery of new music, but people are not willing to pay for it. (Klein & Farrelly, 2012)

Discussing about the digital models, Study of RIAA shows that by the end of 2011 digital download was still over 10 times bigger revenue generator than streaming in the US (Resnikoff, 2012c). However, by that time Spotify and other streaming services were still quite new there and people were using the free or trial versions of services. In January 2013 Resnikoff (2013) reported that most of the streaming services available in the US were growing faster than paid downloads. Spotify in the top 86% growth in subscribers and 100% growth in active users. In Sweden, home of Spotify, in 2012 already 90% of digital income came from streaming services (Ingham, 2013). According to IFPI (Digital Music Report 2013, 2013), 19% of Internet users use streaming services and 28% buy music downloads in the US.

2.4 Entering the Foreign Market

Jari Muikku (2012) of Digital Media Finland describes export as a sale of product or service to abroad or to a foreign market and opposite of it as import where product or service is brought or bought to domestic market from abroad. Export can be divided to B2C, business-to-consumer operation where the company is approaching directly for the foreign consumer and to B2B, business-to-business operation where the foreign company is searched and contracted to approach the actual consumer of the product or service. (Muikku, 2012) According to Annika Lepola (2009), peculiarity of music

industry is that most certainly the core product is immaterial, as a song or an artist and spin-off product may be tangible, music carrier or other merchandise (Lepola, 2009).

It can be kept as a rule of thumb that domestic music is the most popular in each music market. According to IFPI's Investing in Music (2012) report, of top 100 album sales 2011, the local music represented 62 percent in the USA and the same trend continues with other of the eight biggest music markets in the world. That leaves 38 percent to imported music in the US and including the album sales outside top 100 as well the domestic percentage will probably be even greater. According to BPI, British artists accounted 13.7% of artist albums sold in the US in 2012. (New British invasion as Brits bag record share of American music market in 2012, 2013). When the imported music in total represents less than 38 percent of the US sales and the British artists take major portion of that, the segment left to artists from other regions is quite low.

According to music industry interviews conducted by Lepola (2009), export literature and their export strategy models with the focus on target market research might not apply and is not kept that important in music industry where coincidence may lead to the export business. The decisions to export music are made by the essential front line knowledge on foreign music markets that is based on expertise of the music industry professionals and their experience. Monitoring the events and phenomena in the important music markets is part of the job of music industry professional. (Lepola, 2009)

Typically Finnish companies exporting music apart from multinational companies are SME companies employing only few people and thus networking is an essential part of their operations. Reaching to abroad demands capital and time from companies that are often understaffed and sometimes struggling to make profit even in their home market. The secured home market and stable economy are extremely important for the company to be able to succeed abroad. (Ailamo, 2009) In interviews conducted by Lepola (2009) it was made clear that music entrepreneurs are willing to enter foreign markets but the capital to do so is often missing. Most commonly, the funding

is sought project-by-project basis and might be granted retrospectively. (Lepola, 2009) Jonas Vebner (2012) of Music Export Norway says that the biggest barriers to entry are felt to be costs to enter, lack of contacts and challenges in creating them, lack of competence in the foreign market, artist readiness and quality and for the last, the music genre.

As Allen (2009) mentions in the Music Media and Press chapter, the story behind the artist is essential for the rising the awareness. According to Koplowitz (2013), an artist being from Finland or Nordic is not enough but it can be an important part of the story since Nordic is kept 'cool' in the US at the moment. According to Parker (2012) of PRS for Music, for entering foreign markets an artist should obtain word-of-mouth, people discussing about the artist since the promoters and press do follow the blogs, social media and fan activity. Also Dan Koplowitz (2013) of Friendly Fire Recordings state that strong presence in social media, Facebook and Twitter is important.

The viral awareness should be combined with local champions, the people who know the certain music market and someone who has contacts to local players. It can be a booking agent, a publicist or a record label. The local PR companies are very influential and having a local team is essential. (Parker, 2012; Nettverk er essensielt, 2013) Koplowitz (2013) defines that even when everything around the release can be done by a Finnish label it might be easier to have at least a local publicist who has contacts and knows the people in the US. Koplowitz thinks the US is a competitive market and it is fragmented with its own specialised players. The live sector is powerful and especially booking agents are really specialised. (Koplowitz, 2013) Songwriter and producer Joachim "Kleen" Alte said to Music Export Norway, predecessor of Music Norway, that in addition to having the local representative, meeting people face-to-face in the US is important. (Eksportintervju: Joachim "Kleen" Alte, 2012) Koplowitz says that for publicity and finding the local players face-to-face meeting is always good but since the US is so wide, some of contacts has to be made via e-mail and phone and Skype calls (Koplowitz, 2013).

Challenges in the US market are the variety of media, difficulty to approach them and hard competition with other emerging artists. The new tastemakers

are blogs and press, radio DJs, club nights and promoters, and TV. (Parker, 2012) In the US there is no public radio in the level of BBC in the UK or YLE in Finland and for an indie artist the possibility to obtain commercial FM radio play is virtually non-existent, college radio and some local radios are basically the ones for indie artists and it is challenging to get even them to play unestablished artists. Therefore radio today is not so important for emerging artists than it used to be and the common way is to introduce the artist first for the audience live and online. (Koplowitz, 2013)

Digital media is increasing market position from print media but print is still quite powerful, especially in some niche genres (Parker, 2012). Koplowitz (2013) says that for an indie artist and label with limited funds the online media is probably the most feasible since there are only few magazines in the US that are focused in music. Some newspapers have music sections but reaching their interest an artist should be touring in the newspaper's circulation area. (Koplowitz, 2013)

According to Parker (2012), an artist should be represented with non-generic press release, with something that gives the press feeling of an exclusivity and the material, song or video could be offered exclusively for some period to reach the interest of a certain media. There should be a strategy, for example, first round would be one week of shows, press and meetings, which would be followed with a plan to return later with a release or a tour. An artist should create continuity and sustainability, and meetings in the early stage could be used to build a network in the specific market. (Parker, 2012) Norwegian artist manager Martin Schilde says in Music Norway interview that long term and short term plans and choosing the best jobs to rise attention and create 'pull' will help as long it is economical for an artist (Nettverk er essensielt, 2013).

According to Koplowitz (2013), today a shelf life of a new album is only couple of weeks and after that it is already old. Therefore, doing promotion and obtaining visibility should be done already before the release and even short lead media such as online media want to release the album reviews before or right when the album is released. The media should be fed constantly with information and news to convince the media to write about the artist several

times. Releasing music videos and songs digitally, as a free download or making streaming available would be good ways to rise awareness and create content for the media. (Koplowitz, 2013)

Tuomo Tähtinen, now executive director of Music Finland has said that artists should consider entering to the US market with same level as tour in the whole Europe. Not just one gig on the east coast and another on the west coast. There is a large amount of micro markets, each state and even each city differ from each other and those markets should be won and conquered separately. (Musaneuvosto 3.11.2011, 2011) Touring in the US is essential for emerging artists, playing in all the major cities over and over again. Getting a booking agent is difficult for artists who have not created an online buzz already. For creating the buzz it might be feasible to book gigs by themselves or open for another artist who is touring. Festivals are not probably for the emerging artists since they tend to attract audience with already established artists. However, showcasing is important especially at the events that are specialised for introducing new artists, the most important being SXSW in Texas and CMJ in New York. (Koplowitz, 2013)

2.4.1 Showcases

“Showcasing bands at trade events is an important part of developing overseas markets. As the saying goes, 'You only get one chance to create a first impression.' In the music industry a first impression can truly make or break a band's chances of success.” (Williams, 2010, 12)

Showcase events and gigs are a great way to introduce an artist to a new market, local experts and audience. Albeit, as reported by Paul Resnikoff (2012a) in Digital Music News, today the biggest showcases such as SXSW are representing superstars and established artists as well, thus it is harder and harder to cut through for emerging indie artists who really need the showcases to establish themselves. Jules Parker (2012) of PRS for Music thinks that Eurosonic in Holland, The Great Escape in the UK and SXSW in the US are the great showcase events for artists to establish themselves and

moreover, the new artists should concentrate on boutique festivals since these festivals are usually more willing to invest to artists yet to be recognised. (Parker, 2012)

A good example of Nordic cooperation in showcasing their artists is JaJaJa, a monthly showcase in London supported by all five Nordic export offices and NOMEX. Every event is curated by well-known UK music industry expert and introduces three most current artists from three Nordic countries. By using the local expertise JaJaJa has been able to gain foothold in London and convince the British audience of new Nordic music. (Williams, 2010) When discussing about the 'cool' factor of Nordic music, Dan Koplowitz (2013) mentions JaJaJa and that something similar in the US would quite certainly rise the value of Nordic music even more. Cooperation between Nordic countries in other promotion possibilities would be helpful for emerging artists as well and this is the purpose and objective of export offices.

2.4.2 Role of Export Offices

According to the statistics of the international recorded music body IFPI, in 2008 only the revenues from Swedish publishing royalties could be considered as proper music export from Nordic region and even when the Nordic region has unique talent and artistic credibility the resources and means to bring that to knowledge of the wide international audience is missing (Williams, 2010). It is common that people from a distant market see Nordic territories and region as an one entity and do not perceive Nordic countries as separate entities. This Nordic brand can be nurtured and benefitted when reaching the audience for the specific Nordic talent. (Williams, 2010)

Music Export Finland, Musex was established to assist Finnish music industry and artists to connect, create cooperation and to increase visibility abroad. In the beginning of 2012, Musex and Fimic, Finnish Music Information Centre, began work towards merger as one operator, Music Finland. Music Finland offers financial aid for tours and promotional events. It also develops and

creates unique opportunities and events to artists and companies to meet and greet the international operators and industry professionals. (About Music Finland, n.d.)

Nordic Music Export, Nomex is a collaborative organisation of Nordic music export offices of Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Iceland. One of its objective is to improve awareness of Nordic music as one unified region by cooperation with the export offices. The cooperation obtains cost savings and efficient targeting for the right focus audience. (Williams, 2010)

Music Finland, has already a strong presence at European showcase festivals, Midem, Eurosonic, The Great Escape, and of course Finland's own Music & Media in Tampere. It is crucial to be able to exploit this presence when the North American media and industry professionals visit Europe and attend these festivals. JaJaJa has taught export offices principles how to reach their audience. Via Nomex, Music Finland is also gaining a foothold on US territory, in showcase festivals and industry events such as SXSW. (Williams, 2010) Dan Koplowitz (2013) knows that bringing Nordic artists to the US is expensive and admits that it might not be feasible without some outside funding, in which Music Finland's and Nomex's roles are important.

3 CASE STUDY - MIREL WAGNER

The case in this thesis concentrates on the releasing the debut album of Mirel Wagner in North America and processes how the release was implemented.

Mirel Wagner is a 24 year old singer-songwriter, born in Ethiopia and raised in Finland. She started to write her own music at the age of 16. Performing only with her voice and acoustic guitar her music could be described and defined as dark folk blues. Her self-titled debut album was released in Scandinavia in February 2011 by Kioski Records and was appraised by Finnish media off- and online.

Kioski Records is an independent record label owned and managed by Aki Roukala. The author of this thesis started to work for Kioski Records in August 2011. In addition to releasing Mirel's album Kioski Records is taking care of Mirel's management and her booking in Scandinavia.

Bone Voyage Recording Company is a German independent label established by Finnish indie band 22-Pistepirkko, based in Hamburg and managed by Quintus Kannegiesser. During the summer of 2011 Bone Voyage licensed Mirel Wagner's debut album in the continental Europe with an option to extend the contract to the UK, and in September 2011 Bone Voyage released the album in Central Europe with a focus on Germany and France. During the autumn of 2011 Mirel Wagner achieved great features in European press including the German Rolling Stone, Der Spiegel and the French television channel France 24. At that time several US record labels were contacted concerning cooperation on releasing the album in North America.

Friendly Fire Recordings is an independent record label based in San Francisco and New York City, run by its owner Dan Koplowitz. Friendly Fire has partly specialised in Nordic music and has released Danish, Swedish and Finnish music in the US. Before Mirel Wagner, Friendly Fire had released music of artists such as Delay Trees and Regina. Quintus Kannegiesser of Bone Voyage Recordings approached Dan Koplowitz with a CD of Bone

Voyage's new signing, Mirel Wagner. Dan Koplowitz approached Kioski Records and following the success in continental Europe, a meeting in Musiikki & Media and Skype and e-mail negotiations, Kioski Records and Friendly Fire Recordings agreed on licensing Mirel's album in South and North America.

2:30 Publicity is a publicity company based in New York City and was appointed by Friendly Fire Recordings to Mirel Wagner's US debut release.

3.1 Releasing the Album

The negotiations about the US release between Kioski Records and Friendly Fire Recordings occurred in October-November 2011 and the agreement of licensing the album was made upon that in December 2011. The first big challenge was faced early on when negotiating the album release date. Bone Voyage Recordings had used their option to extend their licensing to the UK and they had set the UK release date to be January 23, 2012. During the negotiations and finalising the licensing contract with Friendly Fire it was already clear that because of the long marketing and promotion cycle in the US the same January release date could not be met. The US release date had to be later.

The same release date would have been ideal for the releases in both territories because of the shared English language. Even when the album was released first in the Scandinavia and later in the rest of the continental Europe, the promotion was implemented in languages that are not that well spoken in the US. The UK and US music press and online media share the language and when the UK promotion starts the awareness about Mirel's music will spread to US as well. It was assumed that when the audience hears about the artist and the music is not yet available for purchase, and would not be for several months, the illegal downloading might be an appealing choice. How much the UK music magazines are read in the US and vice versa might affect on the result in this matter considerably.

Besides the length of the promotion cycle another matter delaying the possibility to release the album in the US was the manufacturing the actual CD. Friendly Fire Recordings music is distributed by RedMusic, a major distributor and part of Sony Music Entertainment. According to Dan Koplowitz, the schedule from delivering the material for the distributor to an album in the shelves of record shops would have not been possible even if the material had been delivered during the negotiations in November. There was also the Christmas holiday period coming on and the manufacturing plants were to be closed during that time. The distributors deadlines are non-negotiable and neither of the parties wanted to release the album first as a digital download only. The UK release date was tried to push back but Bone Voyage had already started promotion in the UK and there was going to be several features in the UK music press during the early 2012. Quintus Kannegiesser made it clear that if the album reviews were to be issued on music magazines in January, the album should be in the shelves in January. If there is a delay over a month between the reviews and the release, people might loose their interest and forget the new artist and the album reviews. The US date was eventually set to March 27, 2012.

3.2 Artist Social Media and Web Presence

Mirel's social media presence was quite conventional. Social media tools used were Facebook page, website, Vimeo and YouTube, MySpace and SoundCloud. Facebook was used as a main forum, Mirel herself is not active in the social media and as it was thought that her music is kind of mystic and dark, an active presence in the social media would not reflect to her. Therefore it was decided that style of the Facebook page was quite informative, mostly sharing posts about articles written about Mirel, upcoming gigs, releases and other current news. The fans of Mirel could also connect in the Facebook with each other and with Mirel and her staff.

MySpace was used for secondary artist social media. A conversation about discarding the whole account took place but because the page had a somewhat strong following it was decided to be kept updated for the time

being. In practice, that meant updating the photos and upcoming shows and monitoring the user comments and messages.

YouTube and Vimeo were used to publish the “No Death” music video made in August 2011 and it was used heavily in promotion of the album. SoundCloud was used to make it possible to stream songs if one had no other commercial service or ability to use them. YouTube and SoundCloud are commonly used and easy to embed and share on third party websites and blogs and Spotify and other on-demand streaming services were still about to break through in the US.

Since there was only a little content to share in several different social medias and Mirel did not have a personal profiles in them, it was decided not to create new profiles just for Mirel. In video streaming were used Aki Roukala’s personal YouTube and Vimeo profiles and in SoundCloud were used Bone Voyage’s and Mirel’s music publisher Playground Music’s pages.

Following the mystic and dark image of Mirel the website was just one page connecting all social medias together and offering links to press photos, to record label, publicist and publisher sites. Screenshot of the website can be seen in Appendix 1.

3.3 Music Media and Press

The objective of the media strategy with Mirel was to gain visibility in music blogs and music media off and online. Even before the US release of the album was confirmed, while promoting the album in Scandinavia and Europe, several US blogs were contacted about Mirel’s music and especially about the new “No Death” video. The results were not exactly promising at that point, only a handful of American blogs wrote about Mirel or even answered to promotion e-mails about her music. However, when writing occurred, it was always positive. In the beginning of 2012, when Friendly Fire and 2:30 Publicity started the actual promotion for the upcoming release, the results were to be made.

In January 25, 2012 Paste Magazine posted the first article about Mirel's release in the US and some of the biggest online music medias such as Pitchfork and Stereogum followed within a week. After that it was like domino effect, post after post after post. In February, Mirel was featured in The Village Voice (see Appendix 2) article about gloom folk and the song "No Hands" was premiered in MTV Hive and offered as a free download later in RCRDLBL. In March, to promote the SXSW showcases the song "The Road" was premiered and offered as a download in Stereogum and Pitchfork (see Appendix 3) published the album review on Monday of the week the album was released. Mirel was also featured as the artist of the week in the webzine of the fashion giant Vogue. Screenshot of Vogue article can be seen in Appendix 4.

The free downloads with the features in a chosen medias resulted with a flood of re-posts shares in variety of social medias. The audience was multiple compared to one reached just with Mirel's own social medias. Coverage in media such as The Village Voice and Vogue that are not particularly music medias broadened the audience from indie music enthusiasts to people who are interested in culture in general and maybe a bit more into mainstream. At the time of the album release fashion brand Urban Outfitters contacted Friendly Fire about featuring Mirel on their website with Mirel posturing in their clothes. Both parties were interested in the opportunity, even with the challenges finding the appropriate photographer and location for the shoot. Eventually, a solution to challenges was not found and the feature in fashion brand's blog consisted an interview with "No Death" video embedded and promo pictures instead of Urban Outfitters photo shoot.

For keeping the continuity in the US market before the autumn tour the second music video of the song "Joe" was released in April 2012 and the third music video for the song "To the Bone" was released in the end of July 2012.

3.4 Live Appearance

It was clear from the early on that performing in selected showcases would be essential for the artistic success of Mirel. SXSW in mid March 2012 in Austin, Texas was chosen to be the place for the first live performances in the US on grounds of the convenient timing and the popularity of the event among the music business professionals and the indie music enthusiasts. As reported in the prior chapter the song “The Road” was featured in Stereogum to promote the appearance. During the week in music, film and media conference Mirel played six showcases in total. The showcases can be seen from the Mirel’s SXSW flyer in Appendix 5.

During autumn 2011 Mirel had already performed in showcases in Moi! Stockholm in Sweden and in Reeberrbahn Festival in Hamburg, Germany which was found valuable for the promotion in continental Europe. Music & Media 2011 conference in Tampere was missed because it was overlapping with European tour but the author of this thesis was there to represent Kioski and pre-landed the licensing deal with Friendly Fire and moreover, a distribution deal with Japanese indie label Inpartmaint. Before SXSW Mirel performed in showcases in Eurosonic Noorderslag 2012 in Netherlands and JaJaJa event in London, England, both in January 2012.

The hosts of different SXSW showcase events varied considerably. KevChino is an indie music website, PureVolume is a website for discovery and promotion of new and emerging artists and member of SPIN Music Group, a division of media giant BuzzMedia, RED/Sony is the US distributor of Mirel Wagner and her US label Friendly Fire Recordings, Pop Montreal is an annual music festival in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, KVRX is a student radio station for the University of Texas at Austin and North by North Austin was an event by independent record label Instant Classic Records and restaurant/venue Weirdos. During the SXSW Mirel also recorded sessions for Minnesota University radio channel Radio K and Yours Truly website.

Early on, straight after the licensing contract of the album was agreed, the application for Mirel's US working Visa was to be drafted. Even when the appearances on SXSW would be for promotional purposes only and there would be no fee paid it was known that the application processing period would be at least couple of months and possibly more, if additional reports or documents would be demanded. A New Yorker company called Tamizdat was appointed to help in applying the US working visa for Mirel. Tamizdat is specialised in visa applications for performing artists and offer consultation in application itself, proper supporting documents and ensure that the application is received and processed by the authorities. The visa application can be written by artists themselves or by the record label but the expertise on application can save time and effort. Saving of aforementioned obviously costs money and because the application had to be expedited the working visa did cost around 4,000 Euros in total.

After the SXSW appearance booking of North American tour for the autumn 2012 was begun. At the end the North American tour in September 2012 included ten dates, five of them as opening for the noise band Deerhoof from San Francisco. Tour dates can be found in Appendix 6. The costs of the autumn 2012 tour was split between Kioski and Friendly Fire. Music Finland was to reimburse part of Kioski's expenses and ESEK, The Finnish Performing Music Promotion Centre was also going to cover some of the costs.

4 RESULTS

One of the first things decided when building the strategy of Mirel's album release in North America was to focus the promotion and the release close to the SXSW music industry event in March 2012. Mirel playing live in the US would make the media more interested in her and the media exposure more interesting for the audience and the industry professionals. The strategy was similar to the one Jules Parker described for entering a foreign market; live shows, meeting people and plans to come back to the market approached. The objective of the SXSW showcases was to bring the album release to wider audience but also to introduce Mirel as an artist to North American professionals, especially booking agents, promoters and media.

The media exposure relied heavily on the mystic and dark image of Mirel and the "No Death" video was used to emphasise that. The non-generic approach to the media Parker mentioned for the press turned out to be very useful for Mirel's case and in the US. 2:30 Publicity and their publicists Frank Nieto and Kellyn Slone had a great local expertise on the US music media and did a great job with especially webzines and websites.

For the US promotion music video of "No Death" was premiered in Paste Magazine and featured in The L Magazine, Gorilla vs. Bear, among many others. More details in the chart in Appendix 7. The video was uploaded in the end of July 2011 and by January 2013 it was viewed over 175,000 times from Aki Roukala's channel with additional 30,000 views from Playground, Bone Voyage and Friendly Fire channels. From Vimeo it was viewed over 40,000 times. In January 2013, the second music video, "Joe" had about 7,000 views in YouTube and 7,300 view in Vimeo and the third music video, "To the Bone" had about 5,000 views in YouTube and 2,800 view in Vimeo. As it can be seen from Mirel Facebook insight in Appendix 8 and 9, from posting the first Mirel Wagner video "No Death" in July 23, 2011, to posting the third video "To The

Bone” in July 31, 2012, almost exactly one year later, the reach of quite similar Facebook posts had more than doubled from 1,525 to 3,603.

As an overall result the conspicuousness of Mirel Wagner grew remarkably from the autumn 2011 to the end of 2012. As one indicator could be used Facebook; in September 2011 Mirel had likes somewhere around 800 in her Facebook Page and in January 2013 there was over 5,150 likes.

The free downloads and possibility for song streaming did encourage the online media to write about Mirel and the people who read those medias to share the links and spread the word about the artist. The best results for publicity were with Stereogum who premiered “The Road” MP3, included Mirel in SXSW preview and featured her in Band to Watch and 40 New Bands of 2012 articles. They also viewed all three music videos and featured her in their February 2012 Monthly Mix playlist. Other important features were the Pitchfork album review and song features and eMusic by album review with 4/5 stars, spotlight on New This Week and Six Degree of Mirel Wagner article, feature in their SXSW article and sharing “No Death” as their Daily Download. In August 2012 TIME Magazine featured Mirel Wagner in their article 11 Great Bands You Don’t Know (But Should) (see Appendix 10) and in November 2012 she was fourth on Amoeba Records 50 Essential Albums Released on 2012 list. Eventually, from four opinion leaders listed in Third Party Online Media chapter, three wrote about Mirel including Stereogum, Drowned in Sound and Pitchfork when only Quietus ignored her. Online media is useful for introducing new artists because the text, photos, videos and audio can be added together. The people reading about an artist from print media has to switch the media to listen the songs and with radio the info about the artist cannot be delivered while listening.

As Mirel’s music is not something people tend to listen on their way to work or as a background music to their household work, there were not high expectations for radio play. However, her music got relatively good reception in special music programmes and in college radio stations. In May 2012 Southern Californian radio channel KCRW even featured her “To the Bone”

track as a Today's Top Tune, a free download track chosen from their Music Channel selection. Mirel did a session with Minnesota University radio channel Radio K during SXSW 2012 and they have been playing her music fairly often.

Touring

Obtaining the working visa is probably the most expensive single cost for touring in the US. It also takes enormous amount of time and effort to apply and it is not definite that the application is always approved. There are rumours about cases where European artists have toured with tourist visa, and it might be appealing especially if the tour is for promotional purpose, in the early stage of success in the US and making profit is not expected. However, this is quite risky because working without proper visa may result in difficulties to getting visa at all. The working visa and applying it takes time, work and serious amount of bureaucracy. In Mirel Wagner's case there was needed contracts of employment, recommendations from European and Finnish music professionals, concert posters and flyers and so on. All this just to convince that she was really going to the US to tour.

The ten date US tour scheduled in September 2012 had unfortunately poor arrangements already from the beginning, including conditions of accommodation and long travelling hours, sometimes over 22 hours at once by bus when travelling by plane was agreed. After just two shows Mirel notified her manager Aki Roukala that she would not want to continue the tour and the rest of it had to be cancelled.

Record Sales

Distributing the music has changed greatly in previous years and even when the labels would like to hold on to the tangible products it has to be acknowledged that the sales are moving to digital, especially in the US, and streaming is taking over the sales in general. Comparing the record sales of different territories is difficult since the availability of Mirel's album varies from two years to year and a half and to ten months. However, it is surprising that the strongest market for Mirel's music seems to be France, home territory coming as a second. About 80 percent of the North American sales come from

digital and about one third from Central European as well, Finland being the strongest territory when reviewing the physical sales.

The assumption that the listener of indie music is aware and interested in new artists and genres and would be consuming the old tangible products seems to be quite wrong. The vinyl version of Mirel's album is not available in the US but the 80 percent digital share is so large that vinyl would not have that much of an impact. European consumer is clearly more fond of the tangible product albeit one third of the sales were digital. IFPI (Digital Music Report 2013, 2013) reports that one third of global record company revenues came from digital channels in 2012. In case of Mirel European market being in median and North American market and Scandinavia leveling each other the one third of digital seems quite right.

Summary of Mirel Wagner Entering the US Market

Introduction to US audience	SXSW showcases and interviews
Media visibility	Radio play Online coverage Print coverage
Viral marketing	Free downloads Streaming possibilities Music videos over 260,000 views in total Facebook likes increase over 4,000 Facebook reach over doubled
Local expertise	Licensing the album for US label US booking agent US publicist
Plan to come back	Tour and opening slots for known local artist
Record sales	Digital sales good (80% of the US sales) Physical could be better

5 CONCLUSION AND FUTURE SUGGESTIONS

The objective of this thesis was to inspect if a Finnish independent record label and artist would have a realistic possibilities to succeed in the US market. Finnish indie artists and labels have as good possibilities to succeed abroad as any other European artists or labels. Possibly even better than average, since the Nordic music seems to obtain attention at the moment, not the smallest credit from that belonging to individual Nordic export offices and Nomex. Financial aid and help with creating the possibilities to introduce new artists abroad are essential especially for the small labels. It can be seen from the success of JaJaJa showcase event in London that export offices are constantly improving their image as an influential tastemaker of Nordic music.

Entering the foreign market may be possible just with Finnish indie label's own resources but expertise and presence in the target market makes using the local champions recommendable. The contacts with local media and industry professionals seem to be the key factor what ever the music market is. Making profit or so much as breaking even in the US will be difficult but successful promotion campaign and coverage in US media will probably affect on sales in the European and domestic markets, or at least polish an artist's image.

Music consuming and buying habits are changing. Record sales are decreasing, turning more and more in to digital and streaming is increasing market share. When the general atmosphere would suggest that indie artists would sell more physical records, CD and especially vinyl, that is not true. Digital download gives fair price to an artist but is challenged by pirated versions and streaming is not yet providing proper income. This has an effect to label income, especially when it seems that impact of making streaming available and offering free downloads for introducing a new artist is significant. However, when paying subscribers of audio streaming services grow and licensing issues of video streaming services are negotiated to cover worldwide views, income from these may turn to be essential for artists especially when

the royalty flow from those services are more or less continuous compared to one-time payment of digital and physical sales.

Touring is expensive and made difficult with the strict visa policy and bureaucratic application. When planning to enter the US market one of the first things to consider is the visa and touring. Applying of the working visa is time consuming, can cost much and saving in it is difficult. It might be easier in other work fields than culture and music where the employment and work is not so well documented but time should be reserved for the application. Even with an artist like Mirel Wagner, who had already reasonably successful career in Europe, providing the documents needed was a handful. Using local expertise is useful and time saving in this sector as well.

For writing this thesis, finding theoretical foundation for marketing and promotion of a new artist was fairly easy. Difficulties began to arise when trying to find specific information for a certain music market, continent or a country. It seems that there is no accurate and up-to-date academic research or literature about peculiarities of different territories. Even when the author of the thesis was not implementing every aspect of the album release and the promotion, being able to follow the implementation and techniques used was educational and valuable.

The music market is still under a turning point and that means the techniques used in the case in this thesis and solutions to break a new artist might be old already within a year of publishing this thesis.

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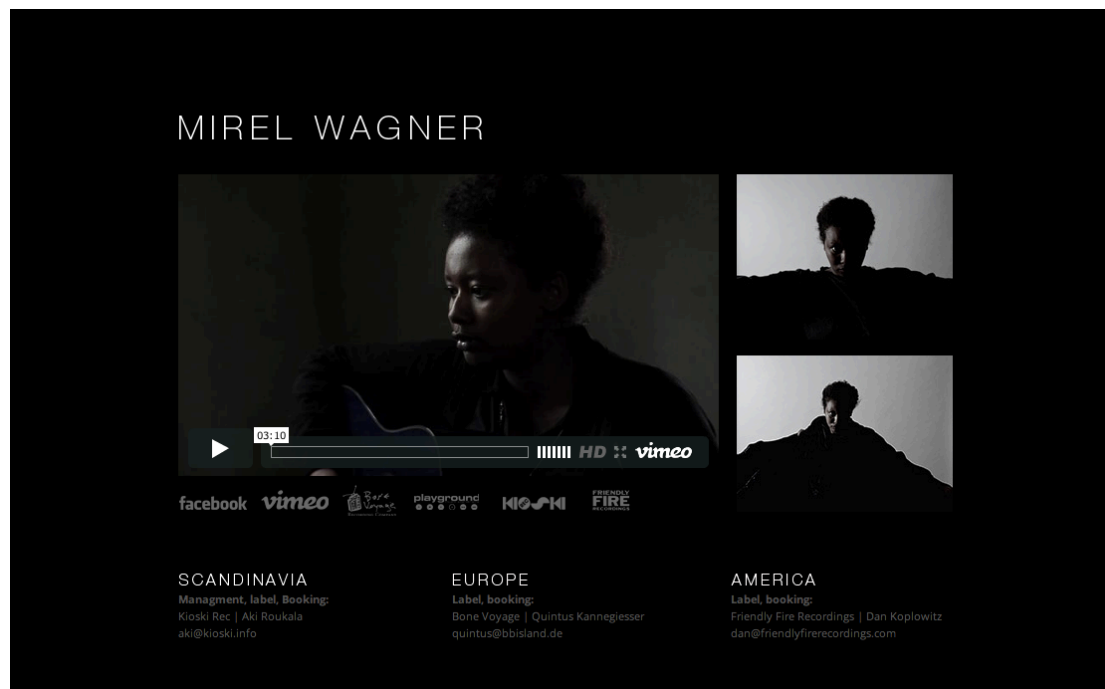
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 - Screenshot of Mirel Wagner website



APPENDIX 2 - Mirel Wagner in The Village Voice



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On Mirel Wagner and the Alleged Death and Apparent Spread of Freak Folk

Scattered cosmic dust

By [Corynne Giffis](#) Wednesday, Feb 22 2012
...continued from page 1

“If you start a trip-hop band, you basically have Massive Attack and Portishead. Those are your Beatles and Zeppelin,” explains [James Jackson Toth](#), known as [Wooden Wand](#) for the better part of the decade and one of the few artists associated with freak folk to make some of the best records of his career after the idea of freak folk began to corrode. “But with these bands, it’s [Anon.Déjà](#), [Throbbing Gristle](#), [Bob Dylan](#), [Ornette Coleman](#). It’s all these things together that made this strange folk hybrid. There’s not one foundation.”


Even years after the core’s collapse, that lack of an anchor remains this sort of music’s most compelling aspect. Almost a decade ago, that quality gave these bands the fluidity to sound like anything, these days, it allows such records to rise from the strangest little pockets, much like Wagner’s LP.

Similarly, the second album for [Thrill Jockey](#) by American singer [Luke Roberts](#), [The Iron Gates at Throop and Newport](#), crams bits of frat rock, Delta blues, stoner metal, and new American primitivism into nine dense tracks. Each of the strains feels recognizable but crinkled, as if Roberts can’t help but break anything he touches.


[Donovan Quinn](#) was part of New Weird America’s previous vanguard with the woolly skygreen [Leopards](#). But [Franky Tonk Medusa](#), his new record under his own name, feels like the faithfully preserved work of a sophisticated songwriter who maintained clarity amid the madness. Quinn’s ruminations on love read like the poetry of simple folks, while his interest in samplers, sears, and sweetness catapult them into ever-surprising places. These songs stand the damage Quinn does to them, and vice versa. There was never a better way to wear “freak folk.”



More or less Weekly: Mirel Wagner



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Wed 24						
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Meady Niteclub						\$55/\$65
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Full article from <http://www.villagevoice.com/2012-02-22/music/on-mirel-wagner-and-the-alleged-death-and-apparent-spread-of-freak-folk/2/>

APPENDIX 3 - Mirel Wagner review in Pitchfork

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Mirel Wagner
Mirel Wagner
Friendly Fire; 2012
By **Stephen M. Deusner**; March 26, 2012

(7.8)

ARTISTS:
Mirel Wagner

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

🔍 Mirel Wagner: "No Death" (via SoundCloud)

On the cover of her self-titled debut, **Mirel Wagner's** face rises out of the gloom, her features emerging from-- or perhaps retreating into-- the pitch background, one eye leveling its gaze at you. It's a haunting image, and one that fits her music perfectly. The Ethiopian-Finnish singer-songwriter plays stark doom-folk in permanent flux between light and dark, life and death, and concerns of the soul and desires of the flesh.

All we hear is a dexterous, spectral guitar and Wagner's haunted vocals, so intimate they could be your inner monologue. Exhibiting a firm grasp of American folk traditions, she understands not only their oldness and weirdness, but also how they hint at worlds that never existed except as fantastical alternatives for the real one. She manages to find common ground between Dock Boggs and Townes Van Zandt, between Geeshie Wiley and Robert Johnson, between *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* and *Wisconsin Death Trip*. As Wagner understands it, folk needs no revival: These referents still exert a primal power no matter how old they are.

There she is at the crossroad, finding erotic possibility as she makes a deal with the devil. "Red" describes a lover with red eyes and possibly cloven feet. "Let the devil take me," Wagner's narrator submits. "He'll eat your flesh and spit out the seeds," she is warned. Such an act may be even tantalizing for the seduced woman. The supernatural elements work because they engage folk music's long history of addressing sin and temptation. They work because Wagner sings them in a small but unwavering voice: Facing eternal damnation, she sounds utterly and unshakably certain of her lust for Old Scratch.


Death looms over this debut, making Wagner's quiet songs sound much louder. "**No Death**" not-so-subtly rewrites the old Appalachian dirge "O Death" with an old EC Comics storyline. A man refuses to believe his lover is dead. Necrophilia ensues. The visceral imagery can be

1. To The Bone
Mirel Wagner
• Mirel Wagner

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Morrissey
Kill Uncle
By Marc Hogan; April 12, 2013

Full review from <http://pitchfork.com/reviews/albums/16427-mirel-wagner/>

APPENDIX 4 - Mirel Wagner in Vogue

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CULTURE

PREV Five Exciting Women to Watch this Spring on...
Five Exciting Women to Watch This Spring on... NEXT

MUSIC

Artist of the Week: Mirel Wagner

by Freddie Campion



Photo: Aki Roukala

Remember libraries? If you're under 25, perhaps not, but for those who do, recall that they used to loan CDs as well as books. It seems more than a little antiquated when compared to the touch-of-a-buttonness of the iTunes store or Spotify, but it was an important method of discovering new music nonetheless. Especially since without that process, we might not have rising Finnish singer-songwriter **Mirel Wagner**, whose haunting, self-titled debut album is released later this month. It was while browsing the library in her hometown of Espoo that a thirteen-year-old Wagner, who was born in Ethiopia but moved to Finland as a baby, found herself drawn to records by blues legends like Skip James, Son House, Jr., and Robert Johnson.

"I just liked the song titles," the now-24-year-old explains from Finland (she's getting ready to leave for Austin, where she'll be making her U.S. debut at South by Southwest on Wednesday). "They were called things like 'Devil Got My Woman' and 'Hard Time Killing Floor Blues'," she continues. "I like anything dark like that."

Inspired by her new Delta-blues heroes, Wagner, who has been playing the violin since she was seven, began writing her own doom-laden tales of woe. But out of fear that this new hobby would alienate her from her Spice Girls- and Backstreet Boys-listening friends, Wagner decided to keep the whole thing under wraps. "I never told my friends I listened to the blues," she says. "I didn't think some old dude moaning about whiskey and women would be that interesting to them, so I was a Spice Girls fan on the outside."

VOGUEPEDIA
THE WORLD OF FASHION IN VOGUE



J.W. Anderson
Jonathan William Anderson's breakout moment came in February 2011 in London, when he showed a mod paisley silk pajama suit, topped with a white rubber clerical collar, as the centerpiece of his second women's collection. Then just 26, the gangly Northern Irish lad was a mere sapling, and yet he managed to amaze seasoned fashion editors with his uncanny prescience: Paisley, it turned out, would crop up seemingly everywhere that season, in the collections of such houses as Preen, Etro, and the mighty Balenciaga.

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Full article from <http://www.vogue.com/culture/article/artist-of-the-week-mirel-wagner/#1>

APPENDIX 5 - Mirel Wagner SXSW Flyer and Schedule



"Chilling murder ballads" – Mojo ★★★★★

MIREL WAGNER

SXSW

TUESDAY 3/13 2am @ Roy's Austin for PureVolume party (340 E 2nd st)	FRIDAY 3/16 4pm @ Weirdo's for North by North Austin (12408 N Mopac Expwy)
WEDNESDAY 3/14 7:45pm @ Red 7 for RED/Sony party – OFFICIAL SHOWCASE (611 E 7th St)	SATURDAY 3/17 4pm @ Domy Books for KVRX party (913 E Cesar Chavez)
THURSDAY 3/15 2pm @ Spill Bar for Pop Montreal party (212 E 6th St.)	7pm @ Maison D'Etoile for KevChino party (2109 E Cesar Chavez)

mirelwagner.com
friendlyfirerecordings.com



APPENDIX 6 - Mirel Wagner North American tour schedule

- 06.09. CAN-Ottawa, ONT, Ottawa Folk Festival
- 08.09. USA-Raleigh, NC, Hopscotch Festival
- 11.09. USA-Northampton, MA, Iron Horse
- 12.09. USA-Lewiston, ME, Bates College
- 16.09. USA-New York, NY, Joe's Public Theatre
- 17.09. USA-Brooklyn, NY, Music Hall Of Williamsburg (w/Deerhoof)
- 18.09. USA-Cambridge, MA, The Middle East (w/Deerhoof)
- 19.09. CAN-Montreal, QC, Pop Montreal (w/Deerhoof)
- 22.09. USA-Chicago, IL, Schuba's Tavern (w/Deerhoof)
- 23.09. USA-Minneapolis, MN, The Brick (w/Deerhoof)

APPENDIX 7 - Mirel Wagner Web Media Exposure Chart

Media	"No Death" video	Free Downloads	MP3 stream	Album Review	SXSW feature	Interviews	Other features or articles
Africa is a Country	x						
All Music Guide				x			
Amoeba Records							x
AOL Spinner			x (the whole album)				
Austinist					x		
Baeble	x						
CMJ				x			
Consequence of Sound							x
DF Dub Report		x					
Downcast Music		x					
Drowned in Sound							x
Ekstatic Vision	x						
eMusic		x		x	x		x
Fact Magazine		x					
Fensepost	x	x					
Filter				x			
Flavorwire		x					
Gorilla vs. Bear	x						
Hypetrack	x						
iTunes (only in the US)				x			
Le Blogothèque	x						
Left Perspectives	x						
Lincoln Journal Star					x		
The L Magazine	x						
Magnet Magazine		x					
Minneapolis fucking rocks	x						
MTV Hive		x					
NPR All Songs Considered					x		
Okay Africa	x					x	
Passion of the Weiss	x						
Paste Magazine	x (US premiere)						
Pitchfork		x	x	x			
PopMatters				x			
Prefix Mag					x		
PRI's the World					x	x	x
Refinery 29							x
SF Bay Guardian					x		
Stereogum	x		x		x		x
TIME Magazine							x
Under The Radar				x			x
Urban Outfitters	x						x
USA Today				x			
Village Voice							x
Vogue							x

APPENDIX 8 - Mirel Facebook insight 1

facebook						Mirel Wagner Home	
Search for people, places and things							
Mirel Wagner Timeline						Create Page	
19/9/2011	Tänään KOM-Ravintolassa!!!!	586	27	8	1.37%		
16/9/2011	Mirel tänään Korjaamolla klo 22!	543	52	14	2.58%		
23/8/2011	Kiitos Oulu!	691	30	10	1.45%		
15/8/2011	Kiitos Flow!	780	45	25	3.21%		
10/8/2011	Video of the Day #69: Mirel Wagner ...	906	32	8	0.88%		
9/8/2011	Stop, shake, honey, go: Mirel Wagner...	778	50	15	1.93%		
9/8/2011	22.09 DE-Hamburg, Reeperbahnfesti...	682	16	9	1.32%		
9/8/2011	Keikkoja: 13.8 FI-Helsinki, FLOW 20...	759	27	15	1.98%		
1/8/2011	Kiitos Turku ja Harjavalta!	752	27	5	0.66%		
26/7/2011	Perjantaina: D8TL, Turku ja Lauantai...	630	15	11	1.75%		
26/7/2011	Nämä ovat Suomen lupaavimmat arti...	581	33	20	3.44%		
23/7/2011	No Death. By Aki Roukala	1,525	114	50	3.28%		
19/7/2011	Kiitos Turku, Juankoski ja Tampere!	697	11	2	0.29%		
19/7/2011	Sonic Youthin Steve Shelley suosittel...	749	80	52	6.94%		

APPENDIX 9 - Mirel Facebook insight 2

facebook						Mirel Wagner Home	
Search for people, places and things							
Mirel Wagner Timeline						Create Page	
All post types							
Date ?	Post ?	Reach ?	Engaged users ?	Talking about this ?	Virality ?		
2/11/2012	Tänään Café Louhi, Espoo.	2,310	152	33	1.43%		
25/9/2012	An interview on Bassoradio featuring ...	2,159	215	28	1.3%		
18/9/2012	23.11. FR-Bayeux, Les Boréales @ L'a...	1,729	50	4	0.23%		
18/9/2012	29.09. SWE-Gothenburg, Stora Teate...	2,302	132	27	1.17%		
11/9/2012	Unfortunately, the rest of the North ...	3,170	629	9	0.28%		
4/9/2012	15.09. USA-Easton, MD, Avalon Thea...	2,220	95	15	0.68%		
3/9/2012	06.09. CAN-Ottawa, ONT, Ottawa Fol...	2,726	202	52	1.91%		
31/7/2012	Mirel Wagner - To The Bone	3,603	355	113	3.14%		
30/7/2012	new Video - wet on Spex Germany	3,633	192	32	0.88%		
17/7/2012	USA dates with Deerhoof are coming ...	3,660	149	56	1.53%		
20/6/2012	30.6. DE-Nürnberg, DESirena/Open ...	2,055	53	14	0.68%		
16/5/2012	29.6. Bättre Folk Festival, Hailuoto, Fi...	1,752	65	6	0.34%		

